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COUNTRY PROGRAMMES AND RELATED MATTERS

Terms of reference for UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board field visits

Note by the Executive Board secretariat

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its third regular session in October 1994, the Executive Board decided to consider new arrangements for future field visits at its first regular session in 1995. In order to facilitate the Board's consideration of the arrangements, an overview of the new proposals is provided below. The annex to the present document contains draft revised terms of reference for future field visits for the consideration of the Board. For practical purposes, it is proposed that the first field visit in 1995 be arranged in accordance with the current practice.

II. OVERVIEW OF NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR FUTURE FIELD VISITS

Number of visits

2. Up to six visits per year are proposed, each normally to one country, instead of the current three visits, each to two countries.

Length of visits

3. As a general rule, ten days in one country, instead of the current two weeks in two countries, are proposed.

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Number of participants

4. Five to six participants are proposed, instead of the current ten, on the understanding that appropriate donor/developing country representation will be maintained (i.e., one per regional group, one or two for the group of Western European and Other States).

Selection of countries to be visited

5. The current approval procedure by the Bureau of the Executive Board of countries to be visited is to be continued.

Selection of participants

6. The current practice of selection of participants is to be continued: i.e., by regional groups, through their respective representatives in the Bureau of the Executive Board. A new provision is to limit the participation of any one individual to not more than two field visits in a three-year period, thereby extending the facility of field exposure to as many Executive Board members as possible.

Level

7. It is proposed to reinforce the current arrangement of maintaining the low-profile, businesslike character of the field visits, keeping protocol events to a minimum.

Reports

8. In the spirit of Executive Board decision 94/4, it is proposed that reports shall normally be limited to three pages and shall not exceed eight pages. The value of the current practice of finalizing the report during the mission is emphasized.

III. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

9. The Executive Board may wish to:

Adopt the revised terms of reference for field visits as contained in the annex to the present document.

Annex

DRAFT REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE: FIELD VISITS (UNDP/UNFPA)

I. PURPOSE OF VISITS

1. The visits are to be working missions of the Executive Board with the ultimate objective of improving the quality of UNDP/UNFPA technical cooperation, the aim of the field visits is to provide direct field contacts and information for Executive Board members and to broaden their understanding of field activities. The team shall focus on programme issues of special relevance to the Executive Board's discussions. Issues to be considered may be, for example, in some of the following areas:

(a) Process of preparing the country programmes and mid-term reviews;
(b) National execution/national capacity-building;
(c) Programme approach;
(d) Relative strengths (comparative advantages), impact and sustainability;
(e) Evaluations and internalization by UNDP and UNFPA of lessons learned;
(f) Decentralization;
(g) United Nations system coordination;
(h) Relevance of Executive Board's work and decisions;
(i) Technical cooperation among developing countries;
(j) Global Environment Facility and Capacity 21;
(k) Other thematic issues, based on the needs and priorities of the countries visited.

2. The Resident Representative shall have the opportunity to suggest additional issues.

3. The team shall visit a representative sample of project/programme interventions. Visits to projects outside the capital are strongly encouraged. Among the projects visited in any one field visit, efforts will be made to ensure representative coverage of both UNDP and UNFPA projects. As far as possible, visits to projects of other funds administered by UNDP will also be undertaken.

II. MISSION CONTACTS

4. Within the focus established for the field visit, the mission shall meet with a selection of the following representatives:

(a) UNDP and UNFPA field staff at various levels, including a separate meeting with the administrative officer/office manager;
(b) Project directors and technical advisers;
(c) Representatives of United Nations specialized agencies and of international/regional finance institutions;
(d) Government ministries responsible for aid coordination, finance, development, and planning as well as relevant sectoral ministries;
(e) Other partners (bilateral aid agencies, non-governmental organizations, etc).

5. Sufficient time shall be allocated for these meetings in order to encourage a thorough dialogue. The clustering of meetings may be considered, if appropriate.

6. Some of these meetings may be held without UNDP/UNFPA officials present, according to the wishes of the team.

7. In order to concentrate on substantive issues, courtesy and protocol visits shall be kept to a minimum. The Secretariat will emphasize this aspect to the team members and the Resident Representatives concerned, in the preparations for the visits.

III. PARTICIPATION

8. The teams shall normally include five to six members. Participants will be expected to have a basic knowledge and experience of the Executive Board's work and be actively involved in the ongoing Board discussions.

9. Equitable regional representation and access to participation in the visits shall be encouraged by flexible rotation among the potential candidates interested in participating in the field visits. To provide the facility of field exposure to as many Executive Board members as possible, the participation of any individual representative will be limited to a maximum of two field visits within a three-year period. The Bureau of the Executive Board will undertake special efforts to ensure this.

10. One experienced UNDP/UNFPA headquarters staff member, may, as appropriate, accompany the team in order to provide general information helpful to the participants' general comprehension and to facilitate organizational and logistical aspects of the visits.

IV. SELECTION OF COUNTRIES, TIMING AND LENGTH OF VISITS

11. The countries to be visited and the timing shall be selected by UNDP in consultation with UNFPA with the prior agreement of the countries concerned, and be approved by the Bureau of the Executive Board. The dates of each visit will be announced with sufficient notice to the members of the Board through the members of the Bureau. The Bureau will select the team members sufficiently in advance to enable the team to establish initial contacts among themselves and decide upon the focus of their visit. Normally, the team will spend ten days in the country visited, including the time needed for the preparation of the report.

V. PREPARATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

12. Travel information (e.g., visa requirements and travel itinerary) shall be made available early to the participants by UNDP headquarters.

13. UNDP and UNFPA headquarters shall jointly provide to the participants readily available background information from various sources on the countries to be visited (e.g., Socio-economic Monetary and Resource Tables (S.M.A.R.T.) Profiles, statistical information, the synthesis of findings of past field

visits as contained in document DP/1993/66, etc.). A copy of these terms of reference will also be made available to team members.

14. A draft schedule of work shall be made available by UNDP to the participants at least two weeks before the beginning of the field visit. There shall be a balance between mission contacts and project visits.

15. Upon arrival of the team in the respective countries, the field office shall hand over further material, consisting of the confirmed country schedule for the visit, a country programme background paper (e.g., aide-mémoire), donor profiles, a detailed list of projects, and a brief issues paper. Rescheduling of the itinerary will be kept to a minimum and undertaken in full consultation with the team members.

VI. REPORTING

16. In order to share their findings and experiences in the Executive Board, the participants shall write a brief informal report, engaging only the members of the team. The report will aim at stimulating the discussions of the Executive Board, with a view to enhancing its contributions for increased effectiveness and efficiency by UNDP and UNFPA. The report will be discussed preferably at the regular session of the Executive Board immediately following the completion of the visit.

17. The reports shall focus on no more than four main issues, important to the team and serve to illustrate wider programme issues drawing upon the experiences gained from the field visit. Bearing in mind decision 94/4 on the format of reports, field visit reports shall not normally exceed three pages with a limit of eight pages in exceptional circumstances.

18. During the visits, appropriate time shall be allocated and organizational arrangements will be made for the joint preparation of the report. All efforts will be made to complete reports before the end of the visit.